महाभारत

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

BOOK 17

THE COMPLETE
MAHĀPRASTHĀNIKA PARVA

Transcreated from Sanskrit
by P. Lal

THE MAHĀBHĀRATA OF VYĀSA

The Complete Mahāprasthānika Parva
Transcreated śloka-by-śloka from Sanskrit by P. Lāl

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Two birds sit
on the golden bough
of the pippala tree.
One eats
the sweet fruit.
The other watches.
Both are happy.
One is happier.
Which?

Śvetāśvatara
Upaniṣad IV : 6

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The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

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BOOK SEVENTEEN

The Complete Mahāprasthānika Parva

The Transcreator

P. Lāl is honorary Professor of English in St. Xavier's College, Calcutta. He was Special Professor of Indian Studies at Hofstra University, New York, 1962-63, and has lectured widely on Indian literature at English, American, and Australian universities. He was a delegate from India to the P. E. N. International Writers Conference in New York in June 1966, and Visiting Professor in the University of Illinois for the spring semester of 1968. Transcreated the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Mahānārānayaṇa Upaniṣads on a Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship award in 1969-70. Visiting Professor of Comparative Literature, Hofstra University, spring 1971. Distinguished Visiting Professor and Consultant, Albion College, April-May 1972. Prentiss M. Brown Distinguished Visiting Professor, Albion College, January-May 1973. Robert Norton Visiting Professor, Ohio University, September 1973-June 1974. Visiting Professor of Indian Culture, Hartwick College, September-October 1975. Eli Lilly Visiting Professor, Berea College, February-May 1977. Honorary Doctorate of Letters, Western Maryland College, 1977. Currently at work on the complete English version of the Mahābhārata. Born 1928, married Shyamasree Devi 1955; has a son Ananda, and a daughter Srimati. Recipient of the Padma Shri award in 1970. Delegate to Asian Poets' Conference, Bangkok, 1988; Cambridge Literary Seminar, 1989; Harborfront Poetry Reading Series, Toronto, Canada, 1989. Appointed Suniti Kumar Chatterji Lecturer of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata in June 2005. St. Xavier's Lifetime Professor of Excellence award, 2005. Conferred Doctorate of Literature by University of Calcutta in 2006 for "literary scholarship, specially the seminal English transcreation of the Mahābhārata." Seventy five cassettes (each of 90 minutes' duration) of P. Lāl reading his transcreation of Vyāsa's Mahābhārata are available from WRITERS WORKSHOP. In October 1999 P. Lāl began a śloka-by-śloka public reading of the transcreated epic to a miscellaneous group every Sunday morning for an hour at the Library of Dharma and Culture in Calcutta to illustrate the importance of Vyāsa's work as an inspiring *oral* experience and not just a print-culture masterpiece, the long-term reading project to proceed till the hundred thousand and plus ślokas are exhausted. 300 hour-long CDs of this recording, taped live are available from WW.

Preface

Just 114 ślokas – the shortest parva of the *Mahābhārata's* 18 parvas. But in the deceptive brevity lies profundity, because the emotional content of the Mahāprasthānika is amazingly rich and inspiring. The reason? Śloka 33 says:

Trailing the Pāṇḍavas
    on their forest-journey
was a dog.

An animal associated in the Hindu Indian imagination with pollution. Indra warns Yudhiṣṭhira: "Heaven has no place for dogs." But Yudhiṣṭhira is adamant: he will not abandon a *bhakta.* If the faithful stray dog is refused admission to this élite celestial club, Yudhiṣṭhira chooses not to be a member. After all, it's not only the canine species that is "imperfect". Human beings have failings too.

His own brothers – and his lotus-petal-eyed common wife Draupadī – have been tested and found wanting. They have, as a result of their very human weaknesses, fallen, as it were, by the wayside. Who has judged them? Yudhiṣṭhira himself – and he has left them to their fate and proceeded on his journey.

This must be rankling in his mind. Who are we to judge – and whom do we judge? His brothers and wife were loyal to him. He abandoned them. The dog is loyal as well. He has made up his mind. Enough is enough. No more moral judgements. He may be Dharmārāja, but he has exceeded the limits of dharma. (Indeed, he has, for the dog *is* Dharma. Can Dharma judge Dharma?) It's a lesson in ultimate humility. Instead of judging and condemning, compassion is the criterion of character. Which is why, in the last śloka of his parva, Yudhiṣṭhira tells Indra about Draupadī whom he has left forlorn on the path:

I want to be with Draupadī –
    the lovely ample-bodied lady,
the dark-blue-cloud-complexioned lady,
    the sattva-guṇa-endowed lady,
the lady who is youthful.
    Take me to my Draupadī.

This takes place at the conclusion of the Mahāprasthānika, but before Yudhiṣṭhira can be taken to his beloved Draupadī (whom he condemned because she was "partial" to Arjuna) he must pass another test. Dharma says he tests Yudhiṣṭhira thrice, in the epic, and each time Dharmarāja emerges with flying colours. But the crucial test of humanity, compassion and magnanimity is exeuted not by Dharma but by Vyāsa. The Mahāprasthānika is the lead-up to the last parva, the Svargārohaṇa, where Yudhiṣṭhira passes through the dark night of his soul when he is given a vision of the horrors of hell.

Despite the fact that the *Mahābhārata* is also Vyāsa's autobiography, we are given very few details of his life. Who were his friends? Who did he admire, who did he dislike? Dante Alighieri placed his *béte noires* in varying degrees of the Inferno spiral. How convenient to consign one's enemies to a variety of delicious perditions! We know that Vyāsa was very unhappy with the conduct of his headstrong son Śuka, and even at one time contemplated committing suicide. What about Duryodhana, Śakuni and Duḥśāsana? What circle of Vyāsan hell do they deserve?

Vyāsa's advice to Yudhiṣṭhira – and to all of us afflicted by deep-seated desire for arbitrary personal revenge – is : None. Not a single *Mahābhārata* character, no matter how "wicked", gets permanent hell. The verdict for misguided and misbehaving humans is: heaven first, and hell later; or hell first, and heaven later. And, because karma is a tight mystery that even the gods cannot unravel, neither heaven nor hell is everlasting. There is always another chance given to the "sinner"– the delighter in good deeds as well as the wallowen in bad – to pass through another birth and experience the redemption the sacred texts describe as mokṣa, where knowledge, known and knower become one.

So Yudhiṣṭhira, the moral judge, is himself judged. Hopefully it is a lesson well learnt – well learnt because well taught by Veda-wise wonder-working Vyāsa in the Mahaprasthānika and Svargārohaṇa parvas of the *Mahābhārata*.

Kolkata
August 2006



Dedication

To
Helen Citron
Fanny Cohen
Bonnie Crown
Susan Embree
Susan Ford
Belle Gendler
Leila Javitch
Sandra Looney
Ruth Ochs
Beverly Ribet
Mary Zepp
whose abounding affection and hospitality
made meaningful and happy my many mini-yātrās
on lecture and teaching assignments
in the United States of America
between 1962 and 1982
this parva
of a mahā-odyssey in the *Mahābhārata*
is gratefully dedicated.

Nārāyaṇaṁ namaskṛtya
Naraṁ caiva Narottamaṁ |
Devīṁ Sarasvatīm Vyāsaṁ
tato jayaṁ udīrayet ||

INVOCATION

We namaskāra Narayana.
We namaskāra Nara
We namaskāra Narottama
We namaskāra Sarasvatī devī
We namaskāra Vyāsa
We utter the word Jaya!
We namaskāra Divinity
We namaskāra Humanity
We namaskāra Divinity-in-Humanity
We namaskāra the goddess of wisdom
We namaskāra Vyāsa
We hope for victory and success!

नारायणं नमस्कृत्य
नरं चैव नरोत्तमम् ।
देवीं सरस्वतीं व्यासं
ततो जयमुदीरयेत् ॥

SECTION ONE

1 "They heard of the battle with clubs
between the Vṛṣṇis and the Andhakas,"
said Janamejaya, "and they heard
of Krishna's departure to heaven –
and after that
what did the Pāṇḍavas do?

2 Vaiśampāyana replied:
When he heard of the mahā-slaughter
of the Vṛṣṇis,
the Kaurava rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
decided to renounce the world,
and said to Arjuna:

3 "O mahā-minded one!
Kāla cooks creatures,
all of them, every single one.
I can see the noose of Kāla
suffocating all creatures.
It is time also you saw what I see."

4 The words of his brother
made Kaunteya-Arjuna mutter:
"Kāla! Kāla!"
He agreed with the remark
of his wise eldest brother
Yudhiṣṭhira.

5 Bhīma and the twins
Nakula and Sahadeva
were of one mind with ambidexterous
Savyasācī-Arjuna.

6 Motivated by desire for dharma
to renounce the world,
Yudhiṣṭhira summoned Yuyutsu,
the son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
by a Vaiśyā-maid,
and entrusted the kingdom to him.

7 He performed the *abhiśekha*-ceremony
and installed Parīkṣit rājā,
after which rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
the eldest Pāṇḍava brother,
deeply afflicted with sorrow,
said to Subhadrā:

8 "This son of your son
will be the Kaurava rājā.
Krishna's grandson, the Yadu-survivor Vajra
will be the rājā of the Yādavas.

9 Parīkṣit will rule in Hastināpura,
and Yādava-Vajra in Śakra-Indraprastha.
You will be responsible
for the care of rājā Vajra.
Never set your mind
on adharma."

10 Having said this, dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira –
to wise Vāsudeva-Krishna,
to his aging maternal uncle Balarāma,
and to others –

11 Dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira,
with his brothers,
promptly offered water oblations.
Then, as ordained by tradition,
he offered *śrāddha*-obsequies
to his deceased relatives.

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12 Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa, Nārada,
rich-in-tapasyā Mārkaṇḍeya,
Bharadvāja and Yājñavalkya –
with solicitous care,
keeping in mind
the glory of Hari-Krishna, –

13 Yudhiṣṭhira feasted them
with delicious food and drink,
accompanied with singing of *kīrtans.*
Jewels, robes, villages, horses, chariots,

14 And hundreds of thousands of girls
were given away to eminent Brahmins.
Then, after revering his guru Kṛpa,
he summoned the citizens,

15 And, O excellent Bharata,
he placed Parīkṣit in Kṛpa's care
as his young disciple. Next,
summoning all his subjects, Yudhiṣṭhira

16 The rājā-ṛṣi informed them
about what he had planned.
They listened to him,
and the citizens and others

17 Were deeply distressed,
and openly expressed their displeasure.
They said to the king,
"You must not do this."

18 But dharma-devoted rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
who knew the vagaries of Kāla,
refused to listen to them.
Dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira
was able to persuade them
of the soundness of his decision.

19 He and his brothers
had made up their mind.
The Kaurava-rājā,
Dharma-putra Yudhiṣṭhira

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20 Removed all his body-ornaments
and dressed in tree-bark.
Bhīma, Arjuna, the twins,
illustrious Draupadī –

21 O lord of men! –
all of them dressed in tree-bark.
O bull-brave Bharata!
Graced with traditional blessings,

22 The bull-brave heroes surrendered
their sacred fire to the waters.
The ladies wept when they saw
those finest of men leaving,

23 As they had once before left
after losing the dice-game,
with Draupadī making a group of six.
But the brothers were cheerful.

24 Yudhiṣṭhira's decision was final,
and the Vṛṣṇis were all wiped out.
The five brothers set out,
Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī making the sixth.
Following them was a seventh,
a dog.

25 Six of them, with rājā Yudhiṣṭhira leading,
altogether seven,
left the elephant-named capital.
The citizens
and ladies from the inner apartments
followed them for some distance.

26 But none had the courage to speak up
and dissuade Yudhiṣṭhira.
They returned, slowly,
all the city-dwellers,

27 Forming a ring
around Kṛpa and Yuyutsu.
O Kaurava Janamejaya!
The daughter of the serpent-king,
Ulūpī,
entered the waters of the Gaṅgā.

28 Citrāṅgadā returned to Maṇipūra.
The other ladies,
the grandmothers of Parīkṣit,
encircled him.

29 O Kaurava Janamejaya!
The mahātmā Pāṇḍavas,
accompanied by illustrious Draupadī,
observed the ordained fast,
and set out on their journey,
facing the east.

30 Yoked to their yoga,
dedicated to *tyāga*-dharma,
the ideal of renunciation,
the mahātmās
passed through many lands,
rivers and seas.

31 Yudhiṣṭhira led the way.
Behind him was Bhīma.
Behind Bhīma was Arjuna,
behind Arjuna the twins.

32 O excellent Bharata!
Behind them all was Draupadī,
a paragon among women,
lovely-limbed,
dark-blue-skinned
lotus-petal-eyed lady.

33 Trailing the Pāṇḍavas
on their forest-journey
was a dog. In course of time,
the heroes
arrived at the lake
of red waters.

34 Dhanañjaya-Arjuna had not discarded
his celestial Gāṇḍīva-bow
and two inexhaustible quivers.
Mahārāja!
He was gripped by his greed
for mahā-precious possessions.

35 There, in front of them,
blocking their path
like a mountain, stood Agni,
the god of fire.

36 The seven-tongued Sāptārci deity
of flaming splendour said:
"*Bho! Bho!* O valiant sons of Pāṇḍu!
I am Pāvaka-Agni.

37 O mahā-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira!
Foe-chastising Bhīmasena! Arjuna!
Heroic twin sons of the Aśvins!
Listen carefully to what I say.

38 O finest of the Kauravas!
I am Agni.
With the valiant help of Arjuna
and Nārāyaṇa-Krishna,
I consumed
the Khāṇḍava forest.

39 Your brother Phālguna-Arjuna
is free to proceed
but first he must give up
his supreme weapon.
He has no use now
for the Gāṇḍīva bow.

40 That gem of a weapon,
the unique *cakra*
of mahātmā Krishna,
has vanished from the world.
When needed again;
it will return to his hand.

41 The magnificent Gāṇḍīva
was brought by me
from Varuṇa
to give to Pārtha-Arjuna.
It must now be returned
to Varuṇa."

42 The brothers persuaded Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
to give up the Gāṇḍīva.
He placed the bow and the mahā-quivers
in the lake's waters.

43 O excellent Bharata!
Immediately Agni vanished.
The Pāṇḍavas faced south,
and resumed their journey.

44 O tiger-brave Bharata!
From the northern coast of the salt sea,
the Pāṇḍavas
proceeded in a south westerly direction.

45 Then they went westwards
till they came
to the city of Dvārakā,
submerged in the occan.

46 Then, turning north,
the excellent Bharatas moved on,
dedicated to their yoga-dharma,
inspired by their zeal
to circumambulate in *pradakṣiṇa*
the entire earth.

SECTION TWO

1 Yoked-to-yoga, disciplined-ātmaned,
the Pāṇḍavas
proceeded north till they came
to the mahā-mountain Himavant.

2 Beyond the Himavant,
they saw an ocean of sand;
still beyond, they saw
the supreme mahā-mountain Meru.

3 Devoted to yoga-dharma,
they pushed ahead quickly.
Suddenly, Yājñasenī-Draupadī stumbled and fell,
her yoga disrupted.

4 Mahā-powerful Bhīmasena
saw her fall on the ground;
he turned to Dharmarājā Yudhiṣṭhira
and asked:

5 "O foe-punisher!
Never did this princess
do any adharma.
Why has Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī fallen?"

6 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"O most excellent of men!
She was always mahā-partial
towards Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.
She enjoys today
the fruits of her favours."

7 Having said this (continued Vaiśampāyana),
the excellent bull-brave Bharata,
wise dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira,
singlemindedly proceeded ahead.

8 Then it was the turn of learned Sahadeva
to stumble and fall.
Seeing him prostrate,
Bhīmasena asked rājā Yudhiṣṭhira:

9 "No *ahaṁkāra*-ego in him.
He was always at our service.
Why should the son of Mādravatī
collapse like this?"

10 "He thought nobody his equal in wisdom,"
replied Yudhiṣṭhira.
"That was the fault
that made this prince collapse."

11 Saying this (continued Vaiśampāyana),
Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira went ahead
with his other brothers and the dog,
leaving Sahadeva where he had fallen.

12 Seeing Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
and Sahadeva fall,
family-loving Nakula,
stricken with grief, also collapsed.

13 Bhīma saw marvellously handsome
and heroic Nakula fall,
and turning to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
he asked:

14 "Why has he fallen – Nakula
our incomparably handsome brother,
whose dharma never faltered,
who obeyed our every word?"

15 Finest-of-the-finest-of-learned-men.
dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira
answered Bhīmasena
regarding Nakula:

16 " 'None one is as handsome as me,'
was Nakula's opinion of himself.
'I am the only one with good looks.'
This was his obsession.

17 O wolf-waisted Vṛkodara-Bhīma!
That is why he fell.
O brave hero! There is no escape –
you get what you deserve."

18 Seeing Nakula and the others
collapse one by one,
slayer-of-heroic-foes
white-horsed Śvetavāhana-Arjuna,
stricken with despair,
also fell down.

19 Seeing Śakra-Indra-strong,
formidable, tiger-brave Arjuna collapse
almost to the brink of death,
Bhīma said to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira:

20 "I cannot recall mahātmā Arjuna
ever speaking an untruth –
not even as a joke.
What misdeed has made him fall?"

21 Yudhiṣṭhira replied, "Arjuna once said
he would in a single day
wipe out all his enemies. He failed.
His pride led to his fall.

22 Phālguna-Arjuna thought poorly
of all wielders of the bow.
That is not the way for anyone
who seeks self-esteem."

23 Saying this (continued Vaiśampāyana),
the rājā proceded on his journey.
Bhīma was the next to fall.
Bhīma asked Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira:

24 "*Bho! Bho!* O rājā! Look!
I am your beloved Bhīma.
Why have I fallen?
Tell me – if you know."

25 "You were a huge eater," said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"and you boasted
about how huge an eater you were,
O Pārtha-Bhīma."

26 Mahā-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira said this,
and proceeded ahead,
without even glancing at him.
Following Yudhiṣṭhira now
was that one dog
whom I mentioned earlier.

SECTION THREE

1 The sky and the earth reverberated
as Śakra-Indra arrived
in a chariot, into which he asked
Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira to climb.

2 Witnessing all his brothers
collapse one by one,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira asked
the thousand-eyed deity:

3 "All my brothers have fallen here.
I want them with me.
O lord of the gods, I do not want heaven
without my brothers.

4 O Puraṁdara-Indra!
The lovely princess Draupadī
deserves every happiness.
Allow her to be with me."

5 Śakra-Indra said: "O bull-brave Bharata!
Your brothers are in heaven,
with Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī, ahead of you.
You will meet them there.

6 O bull-brave Bharata!
They have left their bodies,
and are now in heaven.
You will enter heaven with your body."

7 "O lord of past and present!"
said Yudhiṣṭhira.
"This dog is my *bhakta.*
Let him come with me.
I do not wish any harm
should come to him."

8 "Rājā," said Śakra-Indra,
"immortality, tranquillity,
prosperity, fulfilment,
heaven's felicities, are yours.
Forget this dog.
No harm in this."

9 "O thousand-eyed god!"
Yudhiṣṭhira replied.
"For a man of character
to do a deed
un-āryan, undignified,
is extremely difficult.
I want no glory
that involves abandoning
a *bhakta* of mine."

10 “Dharmarāja,” said Indra,
“heaven has no place
for people with dogs.
In fact, the Krodhavaśas
take away the merits
of all such people.
Keep this in mind,
and forget the dog.
No harm in this.”

11 “Mahendra-Indra!”
replied Yudhiṣṭhira.
“To abandon a *bhakta*
is a crime as grievous
as killing a Brahmin.
Do not expect me
to abandon this dog
for the sake of enjoying
my private happiness.

12 This is my vow.
I will not swerve from it.
I will not abandon
a terror-stricken,
a *bhakta*, a brutalised,
a sheleter-seeker,
or one who is helpless,
even if my own life
is in danger.”

13 “Whatever gifts, sacrifices,
and *iṣṭa*-libations
offered in the sacred fire
are seen by a dog
are taken away
by Krodhavaśa rākṣasas.
Give up this dog.
Give him up, and enjoy
the realm of the gods.

14 O brave Yudhiṣṭhira!
You have abandoned your brothers
and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.
The reward of your karma
is the realm of heaven.
Why are you confused?
You have renounced everything.
Why are you unwilling
to renounce this dog?"

15 Yudhiṣṭhira replied:
"Everyone knows
you cannot be friends
with the dead, you cannot
dislike the dead.
It is not in my power
to revive the dead.
I did not abandon them
when they were alive –
only after they died.

16 To reject a refugee,
to kill a woman,
to steal from a Brahmin,
to betray a friend –
take these four, O Śakra-Indra,
and weigh them at one end
and weigh abandoning
a *bhakta* at the other –
four will equal one."

17 Bhagavān Dharma
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
impressed by the words
of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
was so delighted
that he said sweetly
and lovingly these words
to Indra-among-men
Narendra-Yudhiṣṭhira:

18 "O Bharata Indra-among-rājās!
You are indeed a worthy son
of a wise and noble father.
You feel for all creatures.

19 My son, a long time ago,
in the forest of Dvaita,
I tested you when your illustrious brother
died searching for water.

20 You ignored Bhīma and Arjuna
and preferred to revive Nakula
to show that you felt the same for Mādrī
as you did for Kuntī.

21 And now, saying,
'This dog is my *bhakta*,'
you have refused to climb
into the chariot of Indra.
There is no earth-lord in heaven
who is your equal.

22 O Bharata! O excellent Bharata!
That is the reason
for your bodily attainment
of the undecaying felicity of heaven."

23 Vaiśampāyana continued:
Dharma, Sakra-Indra, the Maruts,
the Aśvins, the gods and deva-ṛṣis
escorted Pāṇḍava-Yudhiṣṭhira in a chariot

24 To heaven, each perfected deity riding
in his own self-propelled vehicle,
each radiant with the holy merits
of pure speech, intelligence and karma.

25 Perpetuator-of-Kaurava-glory
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
dazzled with effulgence as his chariot
ascended swiftly to the sky.

26 Conversant with the ways of the worlds,
vast-in-tapasyā,
eloquent-tongued Nārada said
from the gathering of the gods:

27 "The glory of the Kuru-rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
excels the glories
of all the rāja-ṛṣis
who have attained heaven.

28 I have not heard of anyone else
whose world-encompassing fame
and radiançe of character
have bodily attained him heaven.

29 *Vibho*! Radiant one!
Look up at the sky!
The stars and constellations you see
are the abodes of thousands of gods."

30 Dharmātmā rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
heard the words of Nārada.
With the permission of the gods
and earth-lords, he said:

31 "Auspicious or malign,
wherever my brothers are –
there I wish to be.
I will go nowhere else."

32 The rājā of the gods,
Puraṁdara-Indra heard
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira say this,
and gave this innocuous reply:

33 "O Indra-among-rājās!
Live in this realm
and enjoy the fruits
of your good karma.
Why are you sentimentally attached
to human feelings?

34 O delighter of the Kauravas!
You have attained
the supreme perfection
no human has attained.
Your brothers have not attained
this supreme realm.

Transcreated by P. Lal

35 O lord of men!
Are you still touched
by human feelings?
You are in heaven.
Gaze at the deva-ṛṣis
and Siddhas of heaven!"

36 Wise Yudhiṣṭhira
heard the advice
of Īśvara-Devendra-Indra,
and replied sensibly to him:

37 "O Daitya-conqueror!
I will not be without them.
I want to be
where my brothers are.

38 I want to be where Draupadī is –
the lovely ample-bodied lady,
the dark-blue-cloud-complexioned lady,
the sattva-guṇa-endowed lady,
the lady who is youthful.
Take me to my Draupadī."

This internationally accepted system of Roman transliteration of the Devanāgari alphabet is followed in this transcreation.

V O W E L S

Guttaral	अ	आ
	a	ā
Palatal	इ	ई
	i	ī
Labial	उ	ऊ
	u	ū
Dental	ऋ	
	ṛ	
Guttaral-Palatal	ए	ऐ
	e	ei
Guttaral-Labial	ओ	औ
	o	au

C O N S O N A N T S

Guttaral	क	ख	ग	घ	ङ	ह	:
	k	kh	g	gh	ṅ	h	ḥ
Palatal	च	छ	ज	झ	ञ	य	श
	c	ch	j	jh	ñ	y	ś
Lingual	ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण	र	ष
	ṭ	ṭh	ḍ	ḍh	ṇ	r	ṣ
Dental	त	थ	द	ध	न	ल	स
	t	th	d	dh	n	l	s
Labial	प	फ	ब	भ	म	व	
	p	ph	b	bh	m	v	

Anusvara = ṁ

The Mahabhar

Atri th

Soma (Chandra

Budh

Ayu

Nahus

Yaya

marries Devaya

(The Yadava race)

Yayati marries Devayani

↓

Yadu (& another son Anu)

↓

Vrishni (son)

↓

Devarata (son)

↓

Andhaka (son)

↓

Shura (son)

Vasudeva (son) — Kunti (daughter) marries Pandu

Balarama (son) — Krishna (son) marries Satyabhama — Subhadra (daughter) marries Arjuna

↓

Abhimanyu (son)

↓

Samba (son of Jambavati)

(Line extinct)

(Satyavati's s

union with the r

has sons by

Vichitravirya.

by union with a Vaishya woman

↓

Yuyutsu (youngest son)

Dhritarashtra (son by Ambika)

↓

marries Gandhari

↓

Duryodhana & ninetynine sons & a daughter Duhshala

Pandu (so

marries Kun

↓

Yudhishthira (

Dharma)

Bhima (son by

Arjuna (son by

Arjuna marries

A

Sketch by Srimati Lal

a Family Tree

Rishi

ndu) the Moon

on)

n)

son)

on)

Sharmishtha

(The Paurava & Kaurava race)

Yayati marries Sharmishtha

↓

Puru (& 2 other sons: Druhyu & Turvasu)

↓

Dushyanta (son) marries Shakuntala

↓

Bharata (son)

↓

Hastin (son)

↓

Kuru (son)

↓

Shantanu (son) marries Satyavati

ore-marriage union with Ganga

↓

Bhishma (son)

asa
y her pre-marriage
Parashara: Vyasa
two widows of
bika & Ambalika)

Chitrangada
(son) (dies childless)

Vichitravirya (son)
marries Ambika & Ambalika
(their eldest sister Amba,
reborn male as Shikhandin,
kills Bhishma in the war)

Ambalika)

Vidura (son by
low caste woman)

and

Madri

↓

y

Nakula & Sahadeva
(twin sons by Ashvins)

)

a)

adra

anyu (son) marries Uttara

↓

Parikshit (son)

↓

Janamejaya (son)



The Mahābhārata

The Mahābhārata

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

TRANSCREATED BY P. LAL

The Mahābhārata

OF VYASA

The evolution of wrap-around title-flaps of P. Lāl's monthly Mahābhārata fascicules of the Sabhā Parva that appeared from WRITERS WORKSHOP in 1969-1970 as hardbound volumes 27-37.

C O N T E N T S

CANTO XVII

Mahāprasthānika Parva
The Great Passage

Courtesy

Madhusraba Dasgupta
Samsad Companion to the Mahābhārata
(Sahitya Samsad, Kolkata, 1999)

ॐ The Mahābhārata

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Vyāsa Mahābhārata Śiśupāla-Vadha Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Yakṣa-Yudhiṣṭhira Kathā
Vyāsa Mahābhārata Rāmāyaṇa Kathā

श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता

The Bhagavad-Gitā

Transcreated by P. Lāl from the Sanskrit

The Mahabharata of Vyasa

Condensed from Sanskrit & transcreated into English by P. Lal

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Writers Workshop
Indian Creative Writing in English

WRITERS WORKSHOP was founded in 1958. It consists of a group of writers who agree in principle that English has proved its ability, as a language, to play a creative role in Indian literature, through original writing and transcreation from India, the Commonwealth, and other English-using territories. Discussions are held on Sunday morning at 162/92 Lake Gardens, Kolkata 700 045, India, and diffusion done through a series of Bird-logo books issued under the WORKSHOP imprint. Since October 1999 the Sunday one-hour morning session is devoted to a śloka-by-śloka reading by P. Lal at the Sanskriti Sagar Library in Calcutta, of his complete English transcreation of the Mahābhārata of Vyāsa, planned to continue for the next ten years, till the epic is completed. Since 1971 the WORKSHOP has laid increasing emphasis on its publishing programme. A complete, descriptive 90-page illustrated checklist of over 3000 books and cassettes is available for Rs. 20.

The WORKSHOP is non-profit and non-political. It involves writers who are sympathetic to the ideals and principles commonly accepted as embodied in creative writing; it is concerned with practice not theorising, helpful criticism not iconoclasm, the torch not the sceptre. Not impressed by desire for quick fame and money by pandering to the increasing sexual over-permissiveness and explicitness in 20th and 21st century "literature", and religious intolerance and hatred masquerading as "freedom in creative writing", WRITERS WORKSHOP upholds the primacy of stable ethical and moral values, and prefers writing that enshrines humanist principles, which are of special relevance in the context of the multi-cultural historical palimpsest of the civilisation known as India.

The WORKSHOP publishes a quarterly book-magazine, *Writers Workshop Literary Miscellany,* devoted to creative writing. It is not a house journal; as a rule it gives preference to experimental work by young and unpublished writers, its two chief criteria for selection being imaginative awareness and mature technique. Established writers appear in its pages if their work meets those standards. *WW Literary Miscellany* does not carry advertising. Sufficient postage (registered mail) should accompany book manuscripts and magazine submissions if their return is desired. Only typed submissions are considered.

One can become a member or an Associate by written application to the Secretary, which requires the support of two members and approval by majority on committee. Members are writers with published work to their credit. To be an Associate requires agreement with aims and objects of WRITERS WORKSHOP, active interest in creative writing, and willingness to lend practical assistance to WORKSHOP activities. An annual subscription (Rs. 200) to *WW Literary Miscellany* confers Associate membership. Further details are available from the Director, P.Lal, at the WORKSHOP address: 162/92 Lake Gardens, Kolkata 700045, India (Phone: 2417-4325, 2417-2683 and 3095-9727 E-mail :profsky@cal.vsnl.net.in) Browse in the WW Book Nook Website: www.writersworkshopkolkata.com

Writers Workshop ~ A Credo by P. Lal

Glory be to Mahakala. It is now 2006. I am three score and eighteen. Time for some home truths. Because WRITERS WORKSHOP has close to 3200 separate titles in its checklist (published over 48 years 1958-2006), and because it has averaged around 100 titles each year since 1995, there is a misconception that it is an Indian publishing leviathan. (No other publisher in India has that many titles on its annual list.) The truth is much less awesome. WRITERS WORKSHOP has no office; it operates from my residence, from the living-room and a multi-purpose bedroom. It has no secretary; my "secretary" is a three-tiered Godrej filing cabinet. It has no editor, no "readers" to inspect, evaluate and OK typescripts; I do all three tasks. It has no proofreader; I perform the nitty-gritty of deleting, accreting and correcting. It has no "assistant" to acknowledge or follow up letters; I do all that too. It has no typewriter; I reply in longhand. (From 2004, kowtowing to the hi-tech convenience, I sometimes seek help from my computer-savvy grand-daughter Shuktara to e-mail replies to insistent and urgent enquiries for WW information.) It has no retail or wholesale distribution "outlet"; there is only a cubby-hole of a kiosk at my residence (8 feet x 4 feet roughly) called the Book Nook, where a dedicated young assistant attends to intermittent sales of WW books. This Lake Gardens kiosk opened in 1998, 40 years after WW's inception.

How then has WW survived? Without plush foundations to back it, without advertisement, without large-hearted patrons? Initially, by the skin of our teeth (1958-1964). Then (1965-1990) by my visits to hard currency lands, specially Great Britain, the USA and Australia on lecture assignments and visiting professorships on two dozen or so occasions, and pumping the shekels thus earned to keep alive a gasping ideal.

Alternative publishing is desperately needed wherever commercial publication rules. WW is *not* a professional publishing house. It does not print well-known names; it makes names known and well known, and then leaves them in the loving clutches of the so-called "free" market (which can be and is very cut-throat and very expensive). It is not sad, it is obnoxious, to plead, as publishers do, "I will not publish poetry because it does not sell." Most English book publishing today in boom-time India and outside is book-dumping. There is a nexus between high-profile PR-conscious book publishers, semi-literate booksellers, moribund public and state libraries, poorly informed and nepotistic underlings in charge of book review pages and supplements of most national newspapers and magazines, and biased bulk purchases of near worthless books by bureaucratic institutions set up–believe it or not!–to inform, educate and elevate the reading public.

Because WW goes in for serious creative writing, and because there is no satisfactory distribution network for such writing, its terms of publication are unique. I must be the only publisher in the world who knows when and where every book is sold; I have the name and address of every buyer of a WW book. Upon my acceptance of a typescript, an agreement form is sent to the writer. *All* copyright remains with the writer. Poetry appears in 350 copies; prose in 500. Ten per cent (35 copies of the poetry book, 50 of the prose) is given in lieu of royalty. The writer is also expected to make an advance purchase of 100 copies of his or her book, for sale or distribution as he or she pleases. Printing is done in Calcutta hand-operated presses, situated in the residences of their owners. The whole process is a cottage industry style low-key entrepreneurship, in the belief that small is not only beautiful but viable as well. Vanity and sponsored publishing? Yes, I am humanly vain about it and I do sponsor what I think is good writing. If any lover of literature will offer to subsidise, with no strings attached, striking new work by talented Indian poets, fiction-writers and belles-lettrists, please get in touch with me. The gesture will be acknowledged, appreciated, accepted, and implemented. Such Good Samaritan generosities, not market forces, are at the root of civilised and significant publishing the world over.

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